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Meagher County
Conservation
District long
range plan

MEAGHER COUNTY

CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
Foreward	1
Concepts	2
A Conservation District Is	3
District Responsibilities	4
Authorizations	5
Organization, Location, and Acreage	6
District Relationship to State Government	7
Description of District	8
County Planning	10
Fish and Wildlife	10
Great Plains	11
Information and Education	11
Mining and Reclamation	11
Noxious Weeds	12
Outdoor Recreation	12
Preditor Control	13
Private Woodlands	13
Public Lands	14
Rangeland Resource	14
Roads and Highways	15
Urban Development	15
Water Resources	16
Resolution of Adoption	18

MEAGHER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

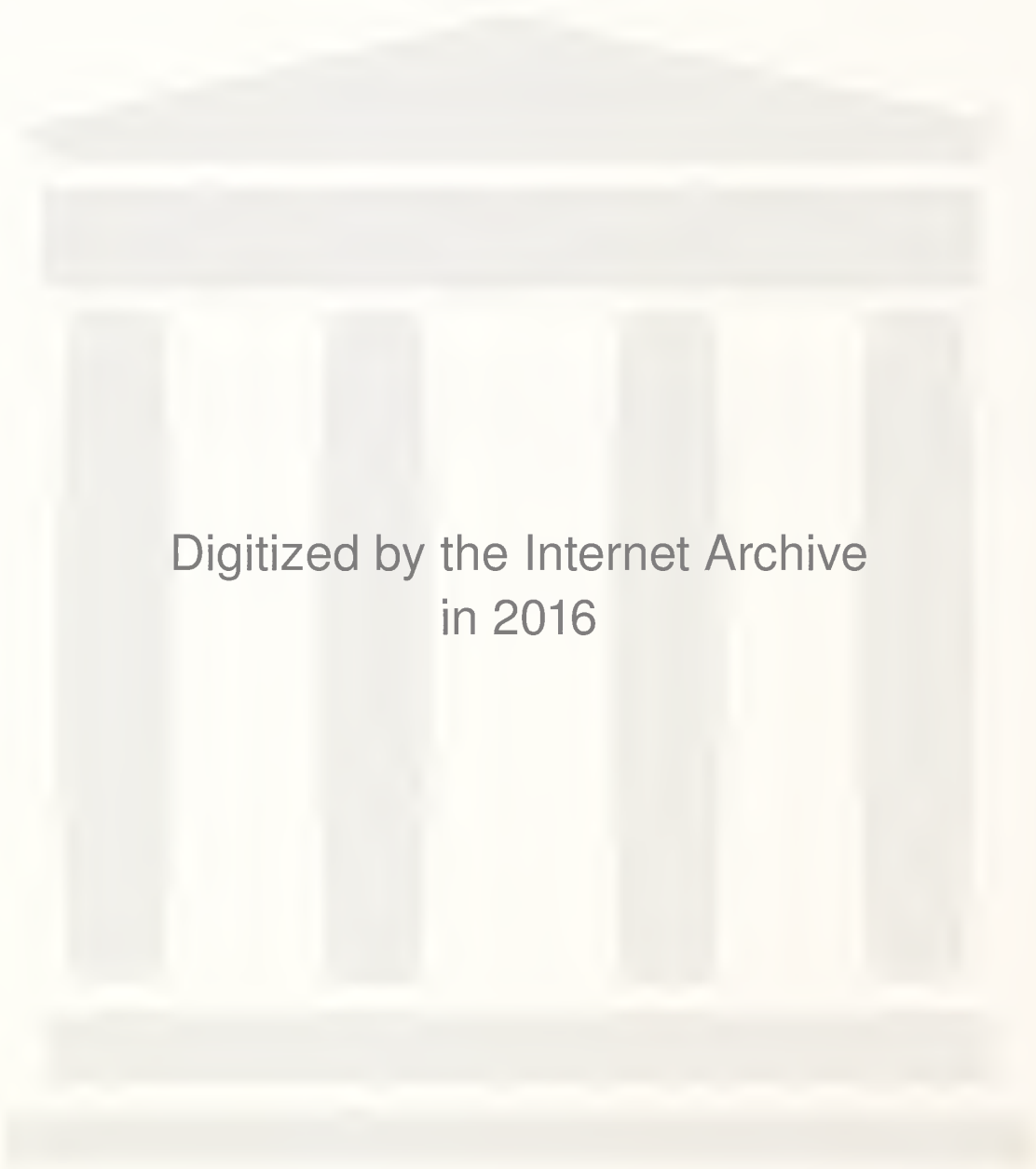
WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, MONTANA

LONG RANGE PLAN

FOREWARD

The Meagher County Conservation Districts' Long Range Plan is a guide to assist the district supervisors and others with the over-all development of the natural resources in the county. This plan was prepared by the Board of Supervisors, with assistance from various individuals, groups, local, state and federal agencies.

The Long Range Plan is broad in scope and will provide the district with direction for the on-going year-by-year action in carrying out its responsibilities.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Conservation means many thing to many people. Perhaps an appropriate definition is:

> "The wise use of natural resources to serve the greatest number of people over the longest period of time while maintaining a quality environment."

Modern soil and water conservation concepts include the multiple use of natural resources--used for the maximum benefit of man both now and in the future. Conservation and wise use of our natural resources refers to all natural resources associated with our soil and water. This includes vegetation, forests, wildlife and recreation.

Whether you are rural or urban, you have an interest in our natural resources and their wise use and improvement now and in the future. Almost everything we eat, much of the clothing we wear, our lumber, plastics, chemicals and other things in common use come from the land. It follows that the wealth of our state and nation depends upon the productivity of soil, water and other allied natural resources.

CONCEPTS

1. The conservation and orderly development of resources is urgent now and will become increasingly so as population pressurers on the land and water increase.

2. Responsibility for initiation and leadership of conservation and resource development should rest with the people in their own communities.

3. Conservation Districts have proven to be the most effective form of local self-government for conservation and orderly resource development.

4. It is a function of federal, state and local governments to assist individuals, and units of government to carry out soil and water conservation work they cannot do alone.

5. Soil and water conservation is the keystone of environmental quality and resource development.

6. Effective soil and water conservation measures combine scientific uses and treatments of land in accordance with its needs and capabilities. It recognizes the operating goals of the owner, or user, and is in harmony with the total resource conservation and development of the community, area or region.

7. Soil and water conservation includes the multiple use of resources with the objective that all uses contribute to a healthy and pleasant environment for people.

8. Soil and water conservation takes into account all natural resources and their effective use for the economic and social welfare of people who live and work in the community, area or region.

9. Conservation and resource development is a task that districts cannot accomplish by themselves. It requires the joint efforts of many federal, state and local agencies to help local people in districts develop and accomplish their conservation and resource needs and objectives.

A CONSERVATION DISTRICT IS

It has often been said that:

"Conservation districts are democracy at work."

The accepted principle in the operation of all districts is:

"Conservation and resource development by the people."

Conservation Districts are:

1. Organized and operated under the State Conservation Act originally passed in 1937.

2. Organized by a vote of the people within the district.

3. Legal subdivisions of the state, public bodies, corporate and politic with Certificate of Organization issued by the Secretary of State of Montana.

4. Managed by Boards of Supervisors of which five are elected by local people and two are appointed by the cities and towns.

5. Assisted by many agencies, organizations, groups and individuals.

Districts provide a means for all interested people in a community, area or region to work together for natural resource conservation and development. Participation is strictly voluntary. Districts are operated and controlled by the people within the district.

DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Furnishing effective local leadership in the form of a properly constituted governing body.

2. Holding regular and special meetings to plan and carry out work and to determine community needs and priorities for conservation and resource development.

3. Developing a long range program that recognizes the interests of all the people in the district and is compatible with the area or regional development plans and state resource plans.

4. Developing, with the help from agencies, an annual work plan within the framework of the long range program, stating what will be done to reach objectives and accomplish work scheduled for the year ahead.

5. Enlisting needed assistance from whatever source is available.

6. Coordinating the several conservation and resource development programs which may operate within the district.

7. Determining priorities for Soil Conservation Service and other assistance to individuals, informal groups, public bodies, private organizations, and other district cooperators.

8. Supervising employees of the district.

9. Managing all funds, facilities, and equipment belonging to the district.

10. Cooperating with other districts in multi-district resource activities, such as comprehensive planning, watershed development, river basin programs, and other resource development projects.

11. Correlation of district programs with those of other agencies engaged in resource planning and development, such as planning commissions, economic development districts, councils of government, irrigation and drainage districts, state planning and development districts, local planning boards, regional planning commissions, county water and sewer districts and flood control districts.

12. Reporting to the public on resource conservation needs and progress of the work in the district.

13. Following up with cooperators to insure effectiveness of the program.

AUTHORIZATIONS

The district program is authorized under the provisions of the Montana Conservation Districts Law. Through Memorandums of Understanding and other agreements the district cooperates and receives assistance from:

U. S. Department of Agriculture dated March 5, 1965
Soil Conservation Service dated August 26, 1964
Forest Service dated February 23, 1966
Montana State Forester dated February 23, 1966
Montana Fish and Game Commission dated February 4, 1970
Montana State Commissioner of Lands and Investment dated February 3, 1970

Informal working relations have been established with the following:

Federal Government

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service
Farmers Home Administration
Agriculture Research Service

U. S. Department of Interior

Bureau of Outdoor Recreation
Bureau of Reclamation
Bureau of Sport Fisheries & Wildlife
Bureau of Land Management

U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency

State Government

Montana Highway Department
Montana Environmental Quality Council
Montana Department of Community Affairs
Montana Department of Health and Environmental Science
Montana Extension Service
Montana Department of Fish and Game
Montana Department of Agriculture
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Local Government

Meagher County Commissioners
City of White Sulphur Springs
Meagher County Planning Board
Superintendent of Schools and School Districts
Meagher County Weed Board
Meagher County Newlan Creek Water District

Non-Governmental

Informal working relationships are established with various local special interest groups, banks, churches, youth groups and civic groups.

Other major laws which relate to the district program are:

Public Law 46, Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1936 (USDA Secretary's Memorandum No. 1488 of February 1, 1962);

Public Law 566, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954;

Public Law 87-703, Section 102 of the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962, Resource Conservation and Development Program;

Public Law 91-190, National Environmental Policy, January 1, 1970;

Public Law 92-500, Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972;

Public Law 92-419, Rural Development Act of 1972;

Public Law 93-86, Title X, Agriculture and Consumer Act of 1973;

Water Quality Rules and Regulations of Department of Health and Environmental Sciences;

Flood Plain Rules and Regulations of Department of Natural Resources and Conservation;

The Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act of 1975; and

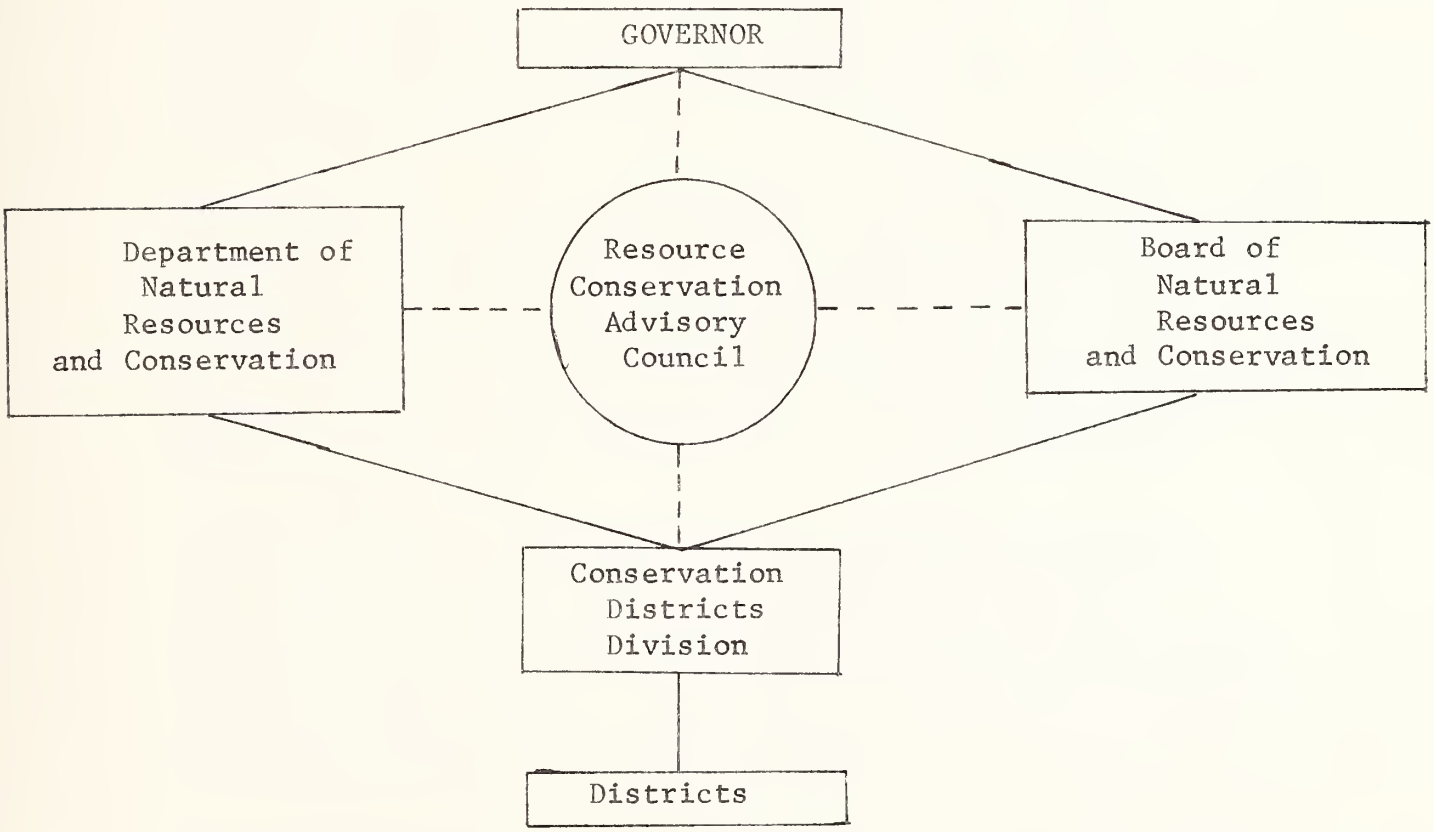
Subdivision Regulations of Meagher County.

ORGANIZATION, LOCATION AND ACREAGE

The District was first organized in 1957 as a result of petitions to the State Soil Conservation Committee and a hearing and referendum held, and included all of the county. The town of White Sulphur Springs petitioned and entered into the District in 1970. The present land area of the District is 1,506,560 acres.

The District's name was the Meagher County Soil Conservation District until 1961 when it was changed to the Meagher County Soil and Water Conservation District and in 1972 the name was changed to the "Meagher County Conservation District". These changes reflect changes in the law, and broader resource conservation and development responsibilities assumed by the District. The original supervisors were: George Bing, Elmer Hanson, Dean Thorson, Glen Christensen and Angus Doig.

DISTRICT RELATIONSHIP TO STATE GOVERNMENT



DESCRIPTION OF DISTRICT

The Meagher County Conservation District, in central Montana, has a total of 1,506,560 acres. The District includes parts of several mountain ranges in the Rocky Mountain system and the valleys between the ranges. The District is bounded on the west by the divide of the Big Belt Mountains and on the north and northeast by the Little Belt Mountains. The Castle Mountains lie wholly within the District in the central portion and part of the Crazy Mountains lie in the southeast corner.

Drainage in the county is provided through four perennial streams. The Smith River and its tributaries, which flows north out of the District to the Missouri, drains the northwestern and central portions. The Shields River and its tributaries, which drains a small part of the southeastern end of the District flows south to the Yellowstone River. Sixteen Mile Creek drains the southeastern part of the District and flows west into the Missouri River. The Musselshell River drains the eastern portion of the county.

A wide variety of soil materials are found in the county. They range from bedrock materials of pre-cambrian age to recent alluvial deposits along the drainages. There are numerous dikes and sills of dark colored igneous rock throughout the county. There is also large areas of various types of igneous exposures in the mountains especially in the Castles and Crazys which are volcanic uplifts.

The rolling uplands in the south end of the county between the Crazy and Big Belt Mountains are underlain by shale, slate and sandstone. These bedrock materials are locally mantled with old gravel terrace remnents. Between the recent alluvial plains of the Smith and Musselshell River and the enclosing foothills are found sizable areas of old gravel capped benches. The most noticeable of these are west of the South Fork of Smith River, southwest of White Sulphur Springs, northwest and immediately south of White Sulphur Springs and in the area around Martinsdale.

There are areas of poorly and imperfectly drained soils near White Sulphur Springs on the north and south forks of the Smith River and on the river proper to the west and on Sixteen Mile Creek near Ringling.

The precipitation in the county varys from 10 to 50 inches annually. The frost-free period varys from 60 to 110 days. This plus the wide variety of soil parent material produces a multitude of soil types.

Land use maps for Meagher County have been prepared and are available at the Planning Board office.

COUNTY PLANNING

The agriculture oriented way of life is attractive to the residents of the county and in order to enhance and maximize the agriculture, forest products and recreational orientation of the county it is the policy of the board that the future expansion and growth must be compatible not only with such orientation but also consistant with the primary purpose of food and fiber production.

1. The District will appoint one member of the Board to serve on the County Planning Board and to coordinate the Planning Board and District activities.

2. To insure the continued production of food and fiber, the District will assist in identification of prime agricultural lands and assist in directing all other uses except agricultural away from these lands.

3. Based upon resource data, the District will assist in directing subdivision of land to those areas most suited.

4. The District will assist in providing resource data for on-site evaluation of proposed sub-divisions, community enterprises, and recreational developments.

5. To assist in improving the economic stability of the area, the District will assess and seek support for a Resource Conservation and Development Project in Meagher, Park, Gallatin, Wheatland, Golden Valley and Musselshell counties.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

Natural existing fish and wildlife is of economic importance and provides consumptive and nonconsumptive recreation. To prevent the unnecessary elimination and destruction of natural habitat, the District will encourage land users to integrate fish and wildlife practices into their long range management plans and day to day activities.

1. To maintain present natural habitat, the District will assist in the development of an inventory of critical areas for fish and wildlife needs.

2. The District will provide technical engineering and agronomic assistance to land owners in developing structural measures and suitable habitat for wildlife.

GREAT PLAINS

To provide for the sustained use of the land in an environment that is attractive, convenient and provides a satisfying place to live and work while providing an adequate income, the District will encourage the continuation and expansion of the Great Plains Conservation Program at the national level and will encourage the development of as many local contracts as funding and personnel allow.

1. The District will actively solicit applications for participation in the Great Plains Conservation Program.

2. The District will annually review all pending applications and assign priority for contract development.

3. The District will continue to support adequate funding of the program at the national level.

4. The District will support activities to extend the program for another ten years.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

To provide an active program of conservation and environmental improvement, it is necessary to have a general understanding and acceptance of activities being conducted within the District.

1. The District will provide conservation educational materials to all schools within the county.

2. Provide timely news articles to the local paper.

3. Provide all residents of the county with an annual report and annual plan of activities.

4. The Board will sponsor tours and meeting that will encourage people to act on their own responsibility in developing conservation and environmental improvements.

MINING AND RECLAMATION

The development of non-renewable mineral resources provides economic and social benefits. The indiscriminate development of non-renewable resources has a negative economic and asthetic effect. To provide for use of our non-renewable resources, the District will coordinate and assist in development plans that assure adequate surface reclamation.

1. The District will assign a high priority and assist all persons in providing assistance for on-site resource data in the development of any proposed non-renewable resource development.

2. The District will assign a high priority to provide assistance in developing reclamation plans to be concurrent with non-renewable resource utilization.

3. In instances where the surface owner does not own the subsurface mineral rights, the District will seek to work with both parties in the development of the resource and in satisfactory reclamation activities.

NOXIOUS WEEDS

Noxious weeds in Meagher County are increasing and becoming a threat to cropland, hayland, and rangeland. To combat and control the spread of noxious weeds, the Board of Supervisors will work with the County Commissioners and Weed Board in identifying noxious weeds and encourage land users to incorporate weed control into their daily operations, support and encourage cost-share payments through the Agriculture Conservation Program for noxious weed control and cooperate with and support the Meagher County Weed Board.

1. The Board of Supervisors in conjunction with the Weed Board, will prepare a list of weeds that they consider noxious and recommend that the County Commissioners adopt these weeds as noxious within Meagher County.

2. The Board of Supervisors will coordinate activities with the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service County Committee in maintaining emphasis on a cost-share program for noxious weed control.

3. An active informational program will be designed to assist land owners and operators in the identification of noxious weeds and the appropiate methods of control.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor recreation is a basic human need that contributes to the well being of the individual. It also provides for substantial economic returns to the business community and in some instances to individual land owners. The increased demand for outdoor recreation will have to be met by privately owned facilities. The District supports the use of farm and ranch lands for private and commercial recreational developments and will assist individuals in developing income producing outdoor recreational enterprises..

1. The District will provide basic resource data to be used in the site selection for outdoor recreation enterprises on private lands.

2. The District will provide consultive assistance in development of facilities to be used in outdoor recreation.

3. The District will provide information regarding the availability of cost-share funds from various state and federal programs in the development of outdoor recreation facilities.

PREDITOR CONTROL

The relationship between livestock, wildlife management practices and preditors can cause the livestock industry to suffer economic losses and may cause excessive loss of wildlife. The District will encourage specific control programs aimed at local preditor populations that are selectively carried out.

1. The District will assist in coordinating activities between land owners and various state and federal agencies in identifying areas of high preditor populations.

2. The District will encourage the use of selective preditor control methods.

PRIVATE WOODLANDS

The annual available sustained yield cut from private forest lands in Meagher County is estimated at about four million board feet. For the private land to produce their part of the annual allowable cut for Meagher County, the District will encourage and assist in the development and cooperation between individual land owners, the State Forester, the U. S. Forest Service and the Soil Conservation program administered by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

1. The District will maintain a list of private consultants available to work in Meagher County.

2. The District will encourage land owners to form a group effort to provide blocks of private timber to be placed under a management plan developed with the assistance of the State Forester's office or with consultants.

3. Assist land owners in developing management plans for grazing as well as timber management.

4. The Board will work with the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service County Committee in trying to establish the Forestry Incentive Program within Meagher County.

PUBLIC LANDS

Public lands are administered by federal agencies for the good of all the people. The basic principals of public land use and management must be the sustained use of the renewable natural resources. Wherever possible the concept of multiple-use must be applied to provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people with prioity uses directed by national and local, social and economic demands for the use of the resource. Management decisions regarding the use of public lands must have full public participation, especially at the local level.

1. The increased demand placed upon the nation to supply food for the rest of the world and the demand by the nation for forest products requires that these considerations be met in management decisions on public lands and to this end the District will seek influence management decisions on public lands.

2. The District will seek to provide input into management decisions by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management for public lands within Meagher County.

3. The District will seek to coordinate land use decisions between the public and private sectors to provide the greatest good to the largest number of people.

4. The District will work with federal agencies, local organizations, and private land owners in seeking solutions to access to public lands through private property.

RANGELAND RESOURCE

Rangeland consists of 75% of the acreage in Meagher County. To sustain this social and economic base, the District will formulate a workable rangeland improvement program on a county wide basis, initiate voluntary incentives for upgrading rangeland resources and coordinate the efforts of ranchers and other interested agencies in developing and implementing range plans.

1. Through the District's Rangeland Resource Committee, the District will bring 85% of the rangeland in Meagher County under intensive management.

2. Continue to develop stock water on 90% of the rangeland.

3. Improve the range condition one class on 50% of the rangeland.

4. Provide assistance in coordinating wildlife benefits in rangeland improvement practices.

ROADS AND HIGHWAYS

The continued improvement of our roads and highways is necessary to maintain a viable transportation system. The location of these roads is often through the high productive, irrigated agricultural valleys with no apparent consideration of the productive capability of these lands. The District supports the locating of roads and highways outside of the boundaries of prime, high intensive agricultural areas and recommends the use of soil information in selecting routes for roads and highways.

1. The District will make recommendations on road locations to State Highway Department.

2. The District will support a program designed to provide adequate off-road parking to allow individuals or families to participate in outdoor recreation activities.

3. The District will assist Meagher County in selecting the routes for roads, provide assistance in locating non-renewable minerals and provide seeding plans for gravel pits and along roads to prevent erosion.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The economic and social welfare of the people who live and work in our communities provide the support for all urban and rural conservation activities. To enhance the welfare of the urban residents, the District will assist in the development and maintenance of adequate sanitation facilities, quality water development and assist in the design and development of parks and open space.

1. Work with city to provide inventory and evaluation of existing city water supply system.

2. Provide planning assistance and some on-site layout of city parks and recreational development.

3. Provide the city with site evaluation for location of public buildings and facilities.

4. Provide assistance to the city in the form of soils data, geological information, water table and other items related to sanitation and solid waste disposal.

WATER RESOURCES

All of the streams flowing in Meagher County originate within the county. To maintain and enhance the quality of water production, the District vigorously supports a planned program of upland watershed development. The small watershed program has demonstrated a high degree of effectiveness in resolving local water problems with benefits to both rural and urban interests. The District will continue to support the combination of land conservation treatment with small dams and other structural measures to substantially enhance the economic and social well-being of Meagher County. The District will encourage the most efficient methods of using water for the benefit of all water users.

1. The District will continue to support the efforts of the Meagher County Newlan Creek Water District in the completion of construction of structural measures on the Newlan Creek Watershed project.

2. The Board will assign a high-priority of work to provide technical assistance in irrigation water management in related agronomic practices in the benefited areas on the Newlan Creek Watershed project.

3. The District will work with private land owners and the United States Forest Service to maintain a stable watershed above Newlan Creek Dam.

4. The District will assist in providing resource data and technical assistance in the development of the recreational facilities located on the Newlan Creek Reservoir and in site selection for anticipated private development surrounding the reservoir area.

5. The Board of Supervisors will assist in coordinating activities between the South Fork of the Smith River Water Users, the Soil Conservation Service and other federal and state agencies in determining feasibility

(Continued)

of a Public Law 566, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954, project on the South Fork of the Smith River.

6. The Board will process applications under the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act in as rapid and professional manner as possible.

7. The Board will seek to provide coordination between land owners and the Corps of Engineers in obtaining Section 404 permits of Public Law 92-500, the Federal Water Pollution Control Act.

RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION

On March 6, 1978 at White Sulphur Springs, Montana, at a regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the Meagher County Conservation District, did meet and review the prepared Meagher County Conservation District Long Range Plan and after such review did mutually agree and resolve that such plan be adopted.

Ronald L. Jackson
Chairman

Knute Hereim
Vice Chairman

Vickie Teig
Secretary

Gerrit VanOmmen
Treasurer

Jay Doig
Regular Member

Jack McGuire
Regular Member

Raymond Russell
Urban Member

Dean O. Thorson
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